<u>**Appendix A**</u>

Response to Recommendations of the Expert Panel review of Validated Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes in the Institute of Technology Tralee

Implementation Plan

Introduction

An Expert Panel, appointed by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), carried out a review of validated research degree programmes at the Institute of Technology Tralee. As part of this review, the Institute produced a Self-Study Report (SER) which was considered by the Expert Panel. The Expert Panel visited the Institute on the 14th and 15th October, 2013 following which it issued a report. The Institute considered the Expert Panel's report and issued a response to QQI on 10th December 2013.

The Institute herewith presents the Implementation Plan in response to the Expert Panel's recommendations. This document should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

(a) IT Tralee SER

   Self-Evaluation Report Institute of Technology Tralee Validated Research Degree Programmes (Aug.2013)

(b) QQI Panel Report

   Review Report of Expert Panel: Validated Research Programmes in IT Tralee (Oct. 2013)

(c) IT Tralee Response to Panel Report

   Institute of Technology Tralee Validated Research Degree Programmes: Response to the Review Report of the External Panel (Dec. 2013)

Recommendation	Description of Action to be taken	Responsible Personnel	Progress to date / timeline to completion
Recommendation 1: The Institute should adopt a definition of 'research', or develop one in the light of its priorities, and use it and appropriate associated indicators in any measurement of research progress.	The Institute to update its Research Strategy 2008-13 document. The IOTI research indicators to be incorporated into the revised plan.	Head of Development	The Institute's Research Strategy will be updated by March 2014. **Status:** On-going
Recommendation 2: The Institute should develop realistic and informative measures to evaluate how far research priorities have been achieved, and reliable mechanisms to consider whether the Institute has met targets and what consequences follow.	The Institute to review its research strategy objectives and targets, and re-examine its 8 criteria currently used for assessing research performance in light of the indicators of strategically oriented impact focussed research, development and innovation developed by IoT Heads of Research.	Head of Development	The Institute's Research Strategy will be updated by March 2014. **Status:** On-going
Recommendation 3: The Institute should develop a detailed written Strategic Plan for research, with clear focus areas, bearing in mind the sustainability of the research areas it intends to nurture.	The Institute has a documented research strategy entitled 'Creating our Future 2008-2013', which has a clear focus and specified targets and objectives. This plan is reaching the end of its cycle and is being revised in conjunction with our normal programmatic review cycle and our mission based performance compact between ITT and the HEA to align our research strategy with national priorities.	Head of Development	The Institute has adopted the IOTI agreed metrics for measuring research outputs. The Institute's Research Strategy will be updated by March 2014. **Status:** On-going

Recommendation	Description of Action to be taken	Responsible Personnel	Progress to date / timeline to completion
Recommendation 4: The Institute should consider how it can best provide and implement additional effective senior academic research leadership at Institute level.	An Institute Postgraduate Committee (IPC) to be established which will be the single body responsible for reviewing research proposals, and monitoring postgraduate student progress. A research-active senior academic to be appointed to chair the Institute Postgraduate Committee. The Institute Postgraduate Committee (IPC) to report to the Research and Development Subcommittee (RDC) of the Academic Council.	Registrar / Assistant Registrar	The formation of the IPC was approved by the Planning Subcommittee in December 2013. New structures to be implemented as and from the beginning of Semester 2 in the Academic Year 2013/14. **Status:** On-going

Recommendation	Description of Action to be taken	Responsible Personnel	Progress to date / timeline to completion
Recommendation 5*: The Institute should finalise and approve its 'Anti- Plagiarism Policy and Procedures' as a matter of urgency, address postgraduate research student training in academic fair practice as soon as possible, and ensure that new students are informed of expectations at an early point in their programmes.	The Institute's Anti-plagiarism Policy to be finalised. Training on Anti-plagiarism Policy to be provided to postgraduate research students and supervisors.	Registrar	Review of Anti-plagiarism Policy by a leading external expert completed. The policy was approved at Academic Council on November 18th, 2013. The policy is available to staff on the Institute Infoweb, and to students on Blackboard. Training was provided to academic staff and postgraduate students (November 22nd, 2013) and will be provided on an annual basis. **Status:** Recommendation implemented

Recommendation	Description of Action to be taken	Responsible Personnel	Progress to date / timeline to completion
Recommendation 6: The Institute should ensure that the referencing system it has adopted for the description of 'publications' in its various disciplines is enforced in all its public documentation.	The referencing conventions adopted by the Institute to also apply to public documentation as per recommendation.	Assistant Registrar	The Academic Council has adopted an Institute-wide referencing system (8th October, 2013). The Institute referencing guidelines are available to staff on the Institute Infoweb, and to students on Blackboard. Training was provided to academic staff and postgraduate student (November 22nd, 2013) and will be provided on an annual basis. **Status:** Recommendation implemented.

Recommendation	Description of Action to be taken	Responsible Personnel	Progress to date / timeline to completion
Recommendation 7: The Institute's Research and Development Committee should discharge its obligation to make a periodic assessment of the progress of postgraduate research students as a whole, in order to assure the Academic Council of the continuing appropriateness and effectiveness of arrangements, and to enable deficiencies to be identified and remedied. **Recommendation 8:** The Institute should improve the effectiveness of its present mechanisms for collecting information relating to its responsibility for oversight of the operation and management of research degree programmes.	The Research and Development Subcommittee to develop policy, terms of reference and membership for a single Institute Postgraduate Committee (IPC), which will report to it, twice per annum, on the assessment of the progress of postgraduate research students. The Research and Development Subcommittee to report findings to the Academic Council annually. A specific item to be included in the relevant Academic Council agenda.	Head of Development	The IPC will take on the functions of the School Postgraduate Committees (SPCs) and the Postgraduate Advisory Committees (PACs). New structures to be implemented as and from the beginning of Semester 2 in the Academic Year 2013/14. **Status:** On-going A revised Postgraduate Student Progress Report form is now in place, which enhances the collection of information relating to student progress. **Status:** Recommendation implemented.

Recommendation	Description of Action to be taken	Responsible Personnel	Progress to date / timeline to completion
Recommendation 9: The Institute should produce a student handbook specifically for postgraduate research students, which contains all regulations, policies and procedures, codes of practice etc. that bear on such students.	The existing Postgraduate Student handbook to be re-designed and updated. An equivalent handbook for postgraduate supervisors also to be produced.	Registrar and Assistant Registrar	Handbooks will be compiled in the current academic year and will be issued to all postgraduate students from the beginning of the Academic Year 2014/15. **Status:** On-going
Recommendation 10*: The Institute should update and publish 'Research Ethics & Integrity Codes, Policies and Procedures'. The procedures should include a requirement that all research proposals, including those from staff members, come to the attention of an Institute-level Research Ethics Committee.	Update the Institute's existing ethics review processes. Revised procedures to be promulgated to staff and students.	Head of Development	The Planning Subcommittee has reviewed and recommended approval of the updated ethics review arrangements (December 2013). These are presented for ratification at the Academic Council meeting scheduled for 16th December 2013. Revised ethics review arrangements to be implemented as and from Semester 2, Academic Year 2013/14. **Status:** On-going

Recommendation	Description of Action to be taken	Responsible Personnel	Progress to date / timeline to completion
Recommendation 11*: The Institute should revise the role of the Research Ethics Committee, taking particular note of the good practice already established in relation to Nursing in the Health & Social Sciences, which in the view of the panel could be extended across the Institute.	This recommendation to be implemented. Institute-wide committee to be established, incorporating best practice developed by Institute's Department of Nursing and Healthcare Studies.	Head of Development	Proposals developed, considered and approved by Planning Subcommittee in December 2013. New structures to be in place by beginning of Semester 2, Academic Year 2013/14. **Status:** On-going
Recommendation 12: The Institute should draw on a pool for advice on academic matters, ideally including international as well as national and local academic colleagues.	The pool of external examiners to be widened.	Registrar	This will be implemented for students submitting theses for examination as and from the Summer of 2014 **Status:** On-going
Recommendation 13: The Institute should make clear students' entitlements to resources as early as possible, and in no case later than the point of registration.	The Institute considers that our current arrangements for identifying resources and funding for postgraduate research degree programmes are appropriate. Resources are identified for each project at research proposal stage. The Institute supports the provision of additional resources to projects when required.	Chairperson of IPC	Existing processes adequately address the recommendation. **Status:** Complete

Recommendation	Description of Action to be taken	Responsible Personnel	Progress to date / timeline to completion
Recommendation 14: The Institute should not permit a member of staff registered for a research degree at Tralee to supervise a student registered for another research degree at Tralee.	The Institute currently complies with QQI policy in this regard.	Registrar	The Institute will continue to implement QQI policy in this regard. **Status:** Complete
Recommendation 15: The Institute should revise its policies on permissible research supervisors, and include a provision that postdoctoral researchers may not take the role of principal supervisor.	No action required as no postdoctoral researcher is the sole supervisor for any postgraduate research student pursuing a QQI validated award in this Institute.		Current Institute practice will remain. **Status:** Complete

Recommendation	Description of Action to be taken	Responsible Personnel	Progress to date / timeline to completion
Recommendation 16*: The Institute should urgently ensure that there is adequate training in research methods at discipline level to meet research students' needs	The Postgraduate Research Degree Programme proposal form to be updated to specify discipline-specific research methods to be provided to the postgraduate student. The 'Postgraduate Student Progress Report' to be updated to track the discipline-specific research methods training undertaken by the postgraduate student. Annual individualised research methods/statistical advisory sessions for postgraduate students to be remain an integral part of the supports provided to all postgraduate students.	Assistant Registrar	Postgraduate Research Degree Programme proposal form has been updated. Postgraduate Student Progress Report has been updated. Annual individualised research methods/statistical advisory sessions remain a component of the Education Development Programme for postgraduate research students **Status:** Recommendation implemented.

Recommendation	Description of Action to be taken	Responsible Personnel	Progress to date / timeline to completion
Recommendation 17: The Institute should develop a formal and documented approach to health and safety induction and training for PGR students.	The institute to enhance the Health and Safety element of its postgraduate research students' induction programme. The revised Postgraduate Students Progress Report to include a log of workshops, including sign-off for health and safety training.	Assistant Registrar	Health and Safety training has been provided to existing postgraduate students. New intakes will undergo enhanced mandatory training as part of postgraduate induction. **Status:** Recommendation implemented.
Recommendation 18: The Institute should make arrangements for monitoring the progress of all its PGR students, irrespective of their sources of funding.	All postgraduate research students are treated in the same manner and no preferential treatment is extended to any category of student.	Registrar	No further action is proposed. **Status:** Complete
Recommendation 19: The Institute should disestablish SPCs and PACs, and monitor the progress of individual students and supervisors through a single committee at Institute level, ensuring that informal arrangements remain for the 'supportive' functions currently discharged by the school-level committees.	This recommendation to be implemented. See Recommendation 4.	Registrar / Assistant Registrar	See Recommendation 4.

Recommendation	Description of Action to be taken	Responsible Personnel	Progress to date / timeline to completion
Recommendation 20: The Institute should specify in their regulations or student handbooks what students should do when the relationship with the supervisor breaks down.	This recommendation to be implemented	Registrar / Assistant Registrar	Handbooks will be compiled in the current academic year and will be issued to all postgraduate students from the beginning of the Academic Year 2014/15. **Status:** On-going
Recommendation 21: Follow-up of theses 'recommended with minor corrections' should be the responsibility of one of the examiners.	This recommendation to be implemented.	Registrar	This policy to be implemented for postgraduate research students presenting theses for examination in Summer of 2014. **Status:** Recommendation implemented.
Recommendation 22: The Institute should reconsider the membership of its Examinations Assessments and Appeals Committee (EAAC), and ensure that the membership is related to having the relevant expertise and experience.	Membership of EAAC to be reviewed by Academic Council	Registrar	Review to be completed by June 2014. **Status:** On-going